

The background of the entire page is a complex, abstract texture. It features a mix of colors including deep reds, earthy yellows, and muted greens, all interwoven with dark, almost black, areas. The texture appears to be a combination of fine, fibrous patterns and larger, more irregular blotches, giving it a sense of depth and organic complexity, similar to marbled paper or a microscopic view of certain minerals.

Patterns

by Brooks Kohler

Patterns

by Brooks Kohler



Copyright 2009

All rights reserved.

LICENSED UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS

CC BY-NC-ND 3.0

(download, share, & credit)

Grunge Tree Bark by Yana Ray

Cover art designed by Brooks Kohler



BrooksKohler.com

U.S.A.

This story is fiction.
Similarities to any person living or deceased are coincidental.

To say that Samuel Barstow hit bottom when his wife of three years and two months left him would be a misnomer. The young man fell to pieces. Alone, confined to a modest prefab complete with solid oak cabinetry and big screen TV, he began staying up late, watching old movies, surfing excessive amounts of online pornography, and downloading illegal music. And, when he tried to stop that, he used generic sleeping pills, the stuff that gives you the shakes. And, when that failed to do the trick, he began drinking and only found himself horny when he woke up and needing the digital fix he was trying to avoid. To make matters worse, he did not get hangovers. So, he was able to wake up, feeling somewhat confident and refreshed, only to reach noon and feel that tug in his throat for a night of wild madness.

Yeah, to say he was off soul-searching was just a way of politely saying he had lost or was about to lose his mind. Yet, when you think about what happened, you cannot help but feel that maybe, just maybe, he was justified.

He met his wife, Aubrey, when they were in junior college. Aubrey wanted to be a nurse.

Samuel wanted a job in law enforcement. At the time, it seemed the right thing to do. Jobs were hard to come by, and his father had big time connections with the state police. So, using his father as a springboard, he enrolled in every class he could take to win favor with those who would be giving him a job.

This attracted Aubrey. She liked how he would brag about his future position and tilt back in his chair and slap the desk when he announced to the entire class what he was going to be. She also liked how the students fetched compromises from him, in the hopes that when they were pulled over, they, too, would be in good grace. Yeah, Aubrey liked that sort of thing. She was completely into it.

Late at night, when he had dropped her off from a

date, she would think about all the neat things they could buy with their dual incomes. She reckoned, from hearsay, they'd pull in a good sixty to seventy thousand before taxes, and if she were to start the flower business she wanted, well, they'd be able to take that figure up to 100k or better. It felt good, really good. And, when she told her parents Samuel had proposed, she was greeted with tears, hugs, and one heck of a wedding reception.

It took place at Kay Collin's Family Barn and Country Cookin' Shed. Kay, who had been divorced twice and received her charm on the third take, had managed to woo the likes of David Collins, local entrepreneur extraordinaire.

David was a cocky guy, and Samuel did not like him. David owned everything: two gas stations, four restaurants, a clothing store, car wash, and wrecker service, but he had connections with the state police, and Samuel liked that. Samuel's father also liked that, and so, too, did Aubrey's father who made it a fine point to remind David of the Samuel's future plans.

At the reception, David walked up and gave Aubrey a prize peck to the cheek. This made her blush and drop down in a small-town curtsy. It made Samuel want to knock the smart out of David, but all was soon forgotten when David whispered in the ear of Samuel, "Come by the house this week. I'll help you out on that."

With a wink, he handed Samuel a beer, and with a swagger he walked away, making sure to tell the DJ to crank up the music, and he gave a fake rebel yell that sounded more like a yodel than a call to arms.

Aubrey, flattered by all the attention, turned to Samuel and gave him a big kiss. Then, she hiked her dress and landed a spot on the dance floor, where she was joined by a dozen, old men, all clamoring for a chance to place their gritty hands on her young, nubile hips.

Samuel watched and drank his beer. Across the

room, David winked and pointed his finger. Samuel did likewise and swallowed his pride, along with a heaping gulp of heavy lager. Now it was official. He was married; he was in.

Shortly thereafter, David and Samuel had their little chat. Samuel met with the state police and all seemed perfect. Off to the academy he went, and Aubrey stayed home to tend to the prefab and hopes of finishing the last two semesters of her nursing degree.

Each night Samuel would call her, and each time he would grow more lonesome. He would tell her about his classes, how he had learned to subdue an actor, and how he was being taught to properly discharge his weapon.

In turn, Aubrey would tell Samuel about her classes. She would talk about how she learned the proper way to dress a wound and what not to do when somebody is coming down off hard-core drugs. She bragged about how her instructor had promised to get her a job at the local hospital, since she was one of the better students in class, and about how much she missed him and could not wait for him to come back home and get his job with the state police. She was so excited, and she reminded him of this each time he called.

And when they hung up the phone, Samuel would lament on the conversation and fall back on his bed.

Aubrey would take a shower and go off into slumbering sleep with the belief all was going according to plan. Soon, Samuel would be home, patrolling the highway, and she would be working at the hospital. They'd move out of the prefab, buy a better house, and she'd start that flower business. She would employ her little sister and maybe her aunt. It would be a family business, and she'd cater to the bed and breakfasts and all the fancy weddings. Oh, the joy of it all. She could not wait!

Wait she did though. Samuel returned home and got the job. Aubrey, however, was forced to take an extra

semester when one of her instructors was involved in a car crash. Samuel had worked the crash, and it was bad. When he told Aubrey about it, her heart sank, not for the teacher, but for her degree. Samuel found this cold and he raised his voice. He was happy the woman in the crash was alive.

That night, Aubrey made him sleep on the couch. It would not be the last time, but he was damn sure she would not do that again. That argument changed things.

Aubrey became jealous of his position as she struggled to get hers. Her nubile hips began to roll over the top of her sixty dollar blue jeans, and each morning she found herself standing naked in the bathroom and peering down at the scale.

You see? Samuel's job required lots of calories. He was growing used to highway food and courtesy candy bars, compliments of local convenient stores. He would often bring home these little goodies and leave them lying around the house. Aubrey would find them, and she would eat them. It seemed no matter where he hid them, in the cabinet, in the bathroom, or in his gun chest, Aubrey would somehow find them, and when she did, she would devour everything she found.

Samuel knew it was becoming a problem. Each night, Aubrey would get on the treadmill he had bought for her, and she would jog. Then, she'd shower, come to bed, and not want to have sex. It was becoming a pattern, and law enforcement had taught him to watch for patterns and break them. So, it was only natural that he would ask Aubrey to break hers by getting a job.

At first, she met the idea with contempt. She shouted, she cursed, and she made love to him – which did break the tension – but still Samuel wanted her to get out of the prefab and work. Aubrey held a deep resentment.

“What about school?” she asked.

“What about it? You can still go to school.”

“Yes, but about my studies? It will interfere, and there’s my internship.”

“What?” he asked. He had forgotten about that, and she had failed to remind him. “Alright, I can see your point but get that degree and soon!”

Satisfied she had proven her case, Aubrey continued on with her daily routine. Samuel would go to work, and she would meander about the house. Sometimes, one of her girlfriends would drop by, and they’d go shopping. Samuel would call Aubrey on her five hundred dollar cell phone, and she would answer by telling him she was too busy to talk.

This would make him angry, and he would tell his highway patrol buddies about it. They would all console him and inform him that women were crazy. They would also tell him that there were more fish in the sea, something that Samuel did not like to hear, given the fact that four out of the seven guys he worked with were divorced, and the sea was not too big in his area.

All Samuel wanted to have was what he had planned for, a good job and nice retirement with happy wife. What he did not want was alimony payments and rent. He shuttered at the thought, and when conversation about women would arise at lunch, he would excuse himself, dump his fiberglass tray into the trash bin and wave good-bye to the pretty 18-year-old behind the counter who was just starting nursing school at the junior college.

Yeah, things seemed really bad. Night after night, Aubrey would run the treadmill, they would argue, and Samuel would find himself sleeping on the couch.

Then, things changed. He was at work, pointing a radar at a semi when his cell phone buzzed. It was Aubrey, and given the fact that she seldom called him at work, he answered with concern. “You okay?” he asked.

“I got the job!”

His heart began to beat erratically. He lowered the

radar and sat up. A smile blossomed on his gloomy face. "Where?" he asked.

Now it was not the best job, but it was a job. Aubrey had a friend named Caitlin who ran a small gift and bakery shop on Main Street. It was not a moneymaker by any means, but as of late, Caitlin had been extremely busy, dealing with mother nature.

Nine months earlier, the area had been hit with a bad ice storm that knocked the power out for over a week. As a result, new babies were cropping up everywhere. Samuel and Aubrey had known six couples to bring little bundles of joy into the world, and if Samuel had not been working that week, and if their sex life was not what it was, they would surely be joining them. In fact, there were many babies being delivered, and between filling balloons, baking congratulations cakes, and having to pause to reflect on who was who, Caitlin found herself too swamped to even open a box, let alone run her business. So, she asked Aubrey to help, at least part-time, and Aubrey, seeing this as not too much of a burden on her studies, happily agreed.

Samuel was happy, too, very happy. Aubrey started to lose weight. She being to regain her energy and self-confidence. Better still, being around all those babies and cooing sounds made her want to focus on that great pastime they once experienced together. She even got him to take her to the adult bookstore off the highway, where she used her own money to buy a sexy nighty, and he used his money to buy a board game based on the premise of truth or dare.

For the next several weeks, all seemed well. Caitlin kept Aubrey busy at work, and Aubrey kept Samuel happy at home. She would tell him about the people who came into the gift shop. He would tell her about work and the tickets he had given. He told her about a big drug bust on the interstate and that he was up for a promotion. As a gift, she brought home a cake and a little, plaster, officer statue

that he placed on a shelf near the TV. It was a chubby little guy holding a night stick and it read, "I love my cop!" It made him happy, and he gave her a big hug. It was perfect – she working and he happy.

Then something started to change. Aubrey began coming home later and later from the gift shop. He was well-aware that the baby boom was about over. Caitlin had cut back Aubrey's hours and had her, mainly, making deliveries, but this was sporadic, and, at the most, only a few hours out of each day.

Aubrey was forming a pattern, and being an officer of the law, he was trained to spot patterns and break them. So, he decided to follow her and see what she was doing. Little did he know that by doing so he was setting himself up for slow ruin. Aubrey was going to Caitlin's as scheduled, but then she was meeting a guy in a blue pickup at the city park. Who was this guy? Why was he with Aubrey? Concerned, Samuel began to follow them, and in doing so, he wrote down the truck's license plate number.

Later the same night, when he questioned Aubrey about the man in the blue pickup, she tried to change the subject by accusing Samuel of being overly protective, passing the man off as a friend, and she demanded that Samuel sleep on the couch, which he did. However, it did not make him forget, and come morning, he was damn well-determined to find out who was in that Godforsaken truck!

That's where the trouble began. After he ran the tags, Samuel learned he was dealing with a 28-eight-year-old shade-tree mechanic who had several minor traffic violations on his record and was currently in the process of divorce, the latter part being learned from asking around. This bothered Samuel. He was not an elitist by any means, but it hurt him to think that Aubrey was having an affair with a guy who worked on cars without a certificate. Hell, he probably earned cash money, which was tax evasion! It

broke Samuel's heart, and the more he thought about it, the more it made him want to get even.

Day after day he followed her, and when he questioned her love and loyalty, he got the couch. It was driving him crazy. His appetite was gone. His sex life was back to void. His friends on the patrol kept telling him about other fish, and whenever Samuel drove past the adult bookstore, he broke down in tears.

All he had planned for was coming to an end. He even drove an extra thirty miles to have the lawn mower inspected, so as not to patronize any shade-tree kind.

Everything he had worked for was gone! Gone! And so, with a determined spirit bent on sweet revenge, he lay low behind a clump of trees near where the man in the blue pickup worked. It was late, almost seven, when the truck pulled out onto the highway.

According to the police report, Samuel tailed the actor for a good three miles before pulling him over. Once out of the car, Samuel proceeded to question the actor about his weaving and crossing the yellow line. And, according to court records, Samuel said nothing to the plaintiff about weaving or crossing the centerline, and, instead, threatened to "beat the living crap out of the [plaintiff] if he did not stop messing with his wife!" Stunned, the plaintiff then proceeded to file a written complaint against officer Barstow and sought the aid of counsel to achieve punitive damages for false accusation and loss of reputation as a result of having to defend himself from such libel.

By the time it was all over, the court had done everything but hand Samuel the mop. He was fired from the highway patrol and ordered to pay damages of \$16,000 to the man in the blue truck. And Aubrey had filed for divorce and she, too, sought damages but later had her claim dismissed, on the advice of the court, when it was discovered that she had embezzled over \$2,000 from

Caitlin's candy fund.

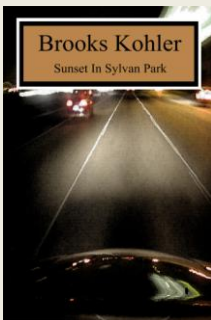
The End



Mitz is a story about two people who find themselves living in a small, southern town, where life is as predictable as the days which are hot and muggy.

Existential in tone with rye humor, *Mitz* is a story that will give the reader an intimate glimpse into the life of a man who has not only been enriched by his actions but also impoverished by the outcomes.

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.COM FOR KINDLE



Sunset in Sylvan Park is a story that takes place in an actual community in West Nashville, Tennessee. The street names are real, the locations are real, but the characters are not.

Sunset in Sylvan Park may not be for the casual reader, but if you want a story to teach you something about relationships and ethics, you will want to read this story.